

THE SUNDAY Globe

Sunday, August 25, 1985

★★★★★

PUBLIC
EVENTS
INCORPORATED

Lafayette Square
1200 S. Eighteenth St.
St. Louis, Mo. 63104

Cooks hogging attention

22 are competing in cookout at wharf

By Margaret Sheppard

St. Louis Globe-Democrat

America's growing culinary phenomenon, the all-out, whiz-bang, big-time show-biz barbecue contest, reached the Gateway City Saturday.

As the smoke drifted high and the scent of cooking pork spread wide along Leona K. Sullivan Boulevard (formerly Wharf Street), St. Louisans enjoyed their city's first Riverfront Picnic and International Barbecue.

But they weren't able to enjoy the meat being prepared by the 22 contestants. There was a rule against the contestants' giving a taste to anyone except a judge.

A few competitors were slipping samples to onlookers, but most cooks were explaining that the rules did not allow samples.

THAT DENIAL disappointed many of the people who turned up on the riverfront expecting to taste various competitive recipes.

"They have some 'Cajun style' at one place," said Tim Edwards of South St. Louis. "I'd really liked to have tried that."

"They talked about samples," lamented St. Louisan Edward Beckman.

But his wife, Eleanor, said she had heard there would be no samples. "Anyway, the Beckmans said, they were enjoying the event. They had tried some of the barbecue for sale at the numerous booths spread among the contestants.

LIVE BANDS played on three stages; and jugglers, mimes and clowns amused the crowd, which Saturday afternoon included many families with young children.



Globe-Democrat/Tim Vizer

Uncle Billy Bolyard pours his secret sauce on pork steaks, then simmers them on the charcoal fire

Saturday during the Riverfront Picnic and International Barbecue in St. Louis.

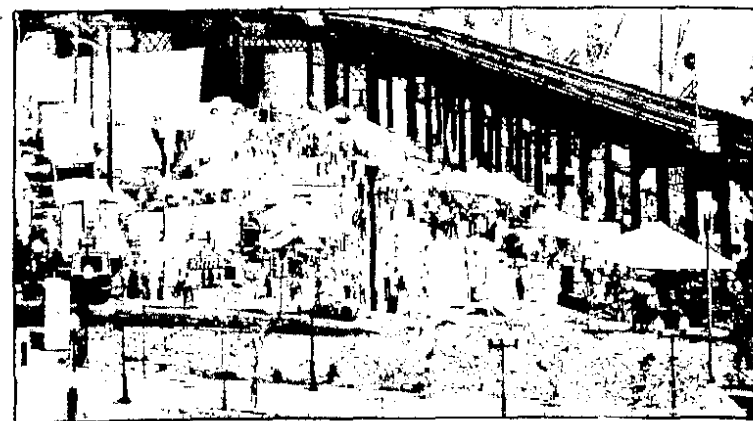
Wayne Spencer, his sister, Linda, and his girlfriend, Denise Smith, all of East St. Louis, had crossed the river to attend the barbecue. Like the Beckmans, they were sitting at one of the picnic tables along Leona K. Sullivan Boulevard.

Spencer said they were enjoying the live rock music from the stage just across the street. They had eaten some pretty good barbecue bought at a stand, Spencer said, though "it wasn't as good as mine."

THE 22 COOKS were competing in

three cooking categories: whole hog, pork shoulder and ribs. The winner of each category will get \$2,000, and the overall winner will receive \$5,000 more. With \$1,500 for the "showmanship" prize, a total of \$30,000 will be given

Continued on Page 12A



Globe-Democrat/Tim Vizer

St. Louisans gather along Leona K. Sullivan Boulevard for the first Riverfront Picnic and International Barbecue Saturday. The event continues Sunday. The view is from the Eads Bridge

Cooks hogging attention

22 competing at first riverfront barbecue

Continued from Page 1A

away. The sponsors say that amount is the largest barbecue prize money in the country.

The contest is "very attractive," said Linda Thomason of Cape Girardeau, head cook for the Boss Hawks Best, six women from Cape and Kennett, in southeast Missouri.

St. Louis' competition is the first she has encountered in which a third-place winner could return home having made a profit, she said. At most competitions, only the grand prize winner receives an amount exceeding travel and competition costs, and sometimes that top winner does not come out ahead, she said.

A whole hog, for instance, can cost \$100 to \$170.

"I have investors," she said. "They buy the hog, and I barbecue it. I serve maybe five pounds of it to the judges, and then I have maybe 95 pounds left. That's a lot of meat. I take it home and give it to the investors."

NOT FAR AWAY, Alfred and Shirley

Lawson of Kansas City regrettably turned away a woman in a sun visor who asked for a sample.

The Lawsons cook under the name "Custom Built Bar-B-Q," and they have a mobile cooker, custom-built by Lawson, who happens to have a machine shop. It has four cooking chambers, two on each end of a small platform.

When they began competing in 1982, the Lawsons traveled around with seven whiskey barrels, said Mrs. Lawson, but it took a long time to set them up, so Lawson designed his custom rig. They usually enter about six contests a summer, Mrs. Lawson said.

JR'S COOK N' CREW consisted of Jerry and Carolyn Roach of DeWitt, Ark. Their team totals nine, but JR said he figured the hard rains in Arkansas last night had prevented the rest of the members from driving north.

He makes cookers, too, and will sell one just like the one he was using for

\$3,000. It has a gas starter, two roomy cooking chambers and thermometer.

"Water is my big secret," he said, pointing out a water chamber next to the cooking chambers.

His brochure says water makes for tender meat and regular temperatures. JR started competing in 1984.

"I've always loved to cook and barbecue," he said. "I started with a big Fourth of July party. The first thing I know, they had a barbecue contest in Little Rock, and I entered it and won it, and that qualified me for Memphis in May. I came in fifth there of 66 contestants."

Memphis in May is the big leagues for barbecue gypsies, with more than 200 competitors.

THE PAWNEE Pork Scorcher, JR. Kennett, Mo., seemed to be strong contenders for the showmanship award. Dressed like pioneers and Indians, they erected a tepee, set up a rail fence, and demonstrated antique firearms and pioneer skills.